

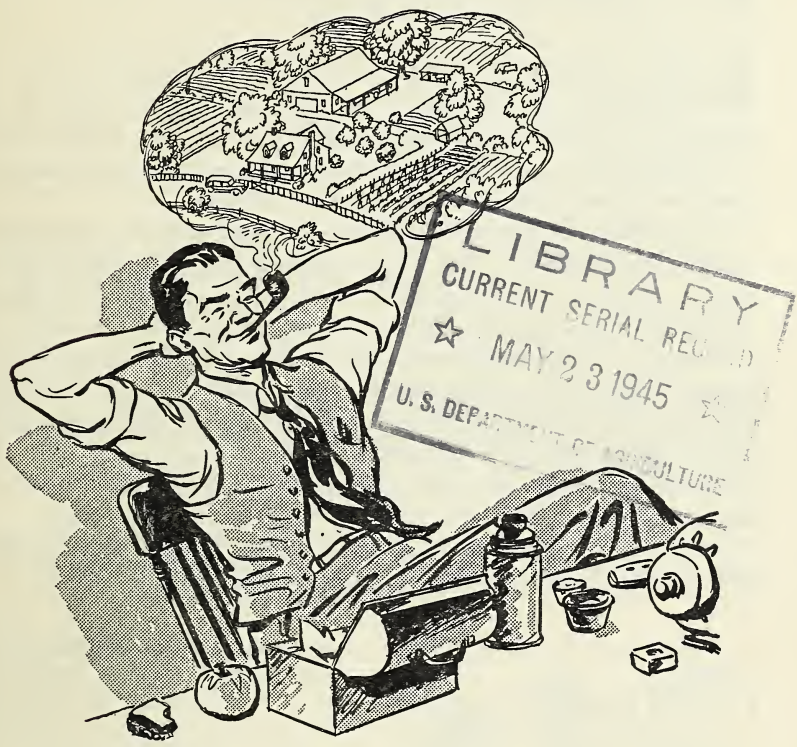
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# IF YOU'RE THINKING OF A Little Place in the Country



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

# IF YOU'RE THINKING OF A Little Place in the Country

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MANY VETERANS AND OTHERS are wondering about the possibility of working at jobs in town but living out in the country, within driving distance, where they can have a little land, a few chickens, and a garden. They want to know what the prospects are for such part-time farming after the war.

The answer, in a nutshell, is that the prospects for that kind of country life are good. The United States is rich in just such opportunity. We have the combination of a large number of widely spaced industrial towns, paved highways, and widespread ownership of automobiles, which makes it possible. Moreover, some of the chief hazards which face the large-scale, commercial farmer are escaped by the man who grows things for home use mostly and whose main income comes from his job in town.

All told, this idea is a good one—good for the people who like it and for the community at large.

The following instances will give a little glimpse at how some such ventures in part-time farming have worked out.

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## Joe and His 10 Acres

LET US CALL the first man Joe Smith. That is not his name but it is near enough. Joe is about 40 years old, has three young children, works in a factory making chains and gears.

He had had enough of life in a city flat. About 6 years ago he bought a "farm" near a small village 10 miles from his work. It had a house—none too large and none too good, but comfortable—a small and rather dilapidated barn, 10 acres of cleared land, and a stretch of woods that came nearly up to the house on one side. It was a little like a pioneer homestead.

Joe had about \$1,200 saved up. He makes somewhere around \$50 a week and saves money. He has Saturday afternoons and Sundays off. He paid \$900 cash for his new home.

The first year he bought a Jersey cow with one injured quarter—that is, she gave milk from three teats. He paid only \$35 for her. The cow was already bred, and from her he raised a fine heifer calf. He still has that old cow, with three heifers from her in 6 years.

Having some skimmed milk to feed, he naturally started keeping a couple of pigs and some chickens soon after he bought the cow. Now he has 2 sows and sells 20 or 25 young pigs a year besides fattening and killing 2 or 3 shoats for family meat.

Joe hired his land worked until 3 years ago, when he bought a small tractor and outfit, including plow, harrow, mower, and rake.

He gradually acquired at auctions a wagon with box and hayrack, and various other tools needed around a farm, so that in latter years he has done virtually all his own work on the land.

At odd times he has been able, by himself, to make some repairs and add improvements to the buildings. In such fashion, working in installments, he got the barn fixed up and a new roof on it. Incidentally, the scaffolding for that job as well as some other jobs on the home and hen house was all made of poles cut from the woods. He has a very good barnyard fence likewise made of peeled poles—looks something like a western corral.

His woods are a constant reservoir of useful things. The family goes to the woods for firewood, fence posts, huckleberries, nuts, leaves for bedding in dry season, and Christmas trees—not to mention rabbits, pheasants, and a deer nearly every fall. No need to keep tame rabbits, for he can go out with a shotgun and knock over one in the woods for table use almost any evening in the season.





Joe's one tillable field is patterned off in different crops much like a larger farm—in this case soybeans, corn, oats, and grass. He usually has to get some extra hay from a neighbor to carry his cows through the winter; this is always obtainable on shares or in exchange for work with his tractor.

Out between house and barn lies the garden, and a splendid garden it is. Mrs. Smith puts up hundreds of cans of vegetables and fruit—and meat—every summer and of course the family “lives out of the garden” all summer.

The springhouse is near the garden. Joe now has that excellent spring water piped into the kitchen.

It must be admitted that this isn't one of those complete “3 acres and liberty” stories that you read about. They don't make an easy living from goats, bees, squabs, nor mushrooms. There isn't anything very romantic about this place. It is just an ordinary worker's home along the road.

But, by and large, how has Joe's venture in country living worked out? The answer is, extremely well. That is the sub-



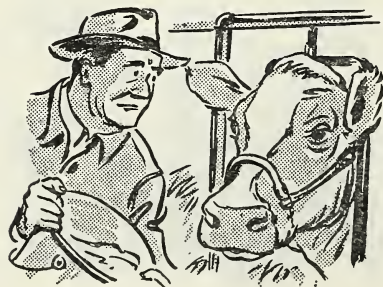
stance of his own verdict and that of his wife.

They live more cheaply. In town they paid \$35 a month for a very modest apartment. Carfare was about \$5 a month, clothes were a larger item, and of course every morsel of food meant a cash outlay.

Now, there is no rent to pay. Taxes and insurance on the “farm” amount to about \$75 a year, roughly \$6 to \$7 a month.

On the whole, the Joe Smiths live more comfortably. They will not have a bathroom for a while—that is the one big disadvantage—but otherwise they have more room, are warmer in winter, far cooler in hot weather, have a cellar and ample other storage space, and “all outdoors” to use in summer. They think they enjoy a better diet now than formerly. They have plenty of cream and butter as well as milk, they have fresh eggs, chicken when they want it, pork and veal of their own raising, and vegetables and fruit in abundance. Mrs. Joe says there are weeks at a time when the only groceries she buys are such things as oranges, coffee, sugar, and salt.

The children go to school in



the nearby village. Mrs. Smith is quite certain that they lead a healthier and more wholesome life in the country than they did in town. Each child has certain chores to do around the place. They play outdoors the year round and their playgrounds are the fields, the woods, and the stream—rather than traffic-ridden streets, vacant lots, and movies. She thinks the country is the place to bring up children.

Of course Joe has to have a car to drive to and from work and the expense of that travel more than offsets trolley fare in town. But when gas is available they have a lot of family pleasure out of the car. In town they didn't have one, largely because of no place to keep it and the feeling that there it was an unwarranted luxury. It takes Joe about 20 minutes to drive to work—about the same time it used to take in town by trolley car and afoot. They are

on a macadam road, which is cleaned of snow in winter, so there is no difficulty about getting out.

Summing it all up, the Joe Smiths consider that they did a wise thing when they moved out to their little "farm." They would not go back to life in town unless forced to by circumstances beyond their control. The one big thing they both emphasize about their life in the country is its independence. They have a feeling that now they can weather economic storms like pay cuts or temporary lay-offs without much worry. The elemental necessities of life are under better control now. No landlord is going to turn them outdoors on 30 days' notice. They have fuel and food and "what it takes" for their family to live comfortably for a long time without much cash income. At least, that's the way they feel about it.

## Apples to Pay Expenses

George Jackson works in the mechanical department of an eastern city newspaper. He was born on a farm. After he married and had lived in the city for several years, he finally decided to get out into the country. His family agreed. He has a large family—six children, the oldest boy is 16. A main thought that prompted the move was that the family could get along easier, have more breathing space and a better living out on some land than they could hope for when cooped up in a little house in town.

With the help of a farmer friend

he located a 60-acre place about 9 miles out of town. It has one of those well-built old houses, a product of the days when plenty of lumber was there for the cut-





ting—big and sturdy, though badly needing paint and certain repairs. The barn was poor and the other outbuildings were run down. The land slopes gently up a hillside from the highway. For this place George paid down \$1,000 cash and gave a mortgage for \$2,000 more.

George's farmer friend, an older, experienced man with a lot of common sense, helped to steer him in the beginning and probably saved him from some mistakes. He avoided one common error—to jump in and try to show the world how to make quick money out of some unusual thing like rabbits or squabs, or mink or bees or some other fad. All he did the first year or so was to fix up the house. His idea was primarily to make a home in the country, not really to run a farm as a commercial proposition.

Gradually he did get together a nice flock of Rhode Island Red hens, bought a Guernsey cow, which the oldest boy learned to take care of, and a couple of pigs. Now, after 8 years on the place, that is still about the extent of the livestock—2 cows, 2 pigs, 100 hens, and a few guinea hens and ducks. The youngsters also have a pony and assorted rabbits and other pets.

But there was one real asset on the place, an apple orchard of some 125 trees, chiefly Baldwins, McIntosh, and Delicious. It had grown up to weeds and the trees had not been disturbed by a pruning saw in a dozen years at least. Yet those trees were right in their prime. When George saw them in blossom the first May after he bought the place, he was fired with enthusiasm to make something of that little orchard.

He went to the county agricultural agent, wrote to his State agricultural college and to Washington for bulletins, talked to nearby farmers who had orchards. In short, he set about getting some real education in apple growing. His old friend up the road played a part, too, helping him prune the trees in odd spells one winter, advising him about materials and tillage and lending him a spraying machine. In time, with the expenditure of some hard work and a little worry the Jackson orchard became what might fairly be called a model of good husbandry.

For the last 3 or 4 years George has sold his apples "on the tree" to a local buyer. That is, the buyer pays so much, lump sum, sends his own pickers, baskets, and truck, and assumes the entire job of harvesting. Last year when apples were high the crop was sold in such fashion to this buyer for \$500. George doesn't have to touch the orchard after the final spraying is done.

The rest of his land he rents out to a neighbor who uses the



pasture and furnishes him with enough hay to keep the cows. There is a good wood lot back on one corner, from which George gets his wood for kitchen stove and fireplace and even cuts a few pine and hardwood logs most every winter and has them sawed up into rough lumber for repair work.

The two oldest children ride into town every day with their father to attend high school. The younger ones who go to school walk about a mile to a district school located at a little crossroads village. Here also is a general store where Mrs. Jackson buys part of her supplies; here they go to church, attend Grange meeting, haul logs to sawmill.

The Jacksons are devoted to their little farm. They are especially attached to their home—and well they may be, for under the influence of paint, repairs, shrubs, and flowers, the fine old house has come to life there amid its noble trees in a way to inspire pride in any owner. It is a big house. Every youngster has his or her own bedroom, they have installed a bathroom, and in the kitchen are all the conveniences that a reasonable housewife could wish for.

"And to think," remarks Mrs. Jackson, "that all those years before we came up here I didn't even have a place to hang out the Monday washing!"

Of course they have a big garden. Mrs. Jackson takes you down cellar in the fall and shows with pride long rows of canned food, hams and sides of bacon hanging overhead, vegetables and



fruit in the bins, cider in casks, and innumerable good things to take a hungry family through winter.

"There is no question that we live more cheaply, have a greater variety of food, and of better quality than we used to in the city," she says. That is her view of the matter, whatever anyone else may think.

George still doesn't regard himself as much of a farmer. His job is in town. He looks upon the farm as a home, a place to be outdoors after the confinement of his daily job around the presses, and finally as a place where they can grow a good part of their own food and fuel, and where the children can have a more wholesome life than they could have in the city.

Nevertheless, he has done well with the small orchard. It now pays the taxes, insurance, ordinary repairs, and virtually all similar expenses of the "farm."

He has paid off \$1,000 of his mortgage and he has money and war bonds sufficient to pay the other half of it soon. He now feels pretty independent.

Incidentally, George has evidence, too, that buying his farm wasn't a bad investment, purely

as a financial proposition. One night he stopped for gas at the roadside station owned by a neighbor. As usual they spent a few minutes chatting and swapping news.

Presently the neighbor said casually, "Say, George, you wouldn't be interested in selling your place, would you?"

"Nope." The answer was prompt. As an afterthought he added, "Wife wouldn't hear of it."

"Well, I didn't suppose you would. But I've thought a good many times I'd kind of like to

have it. Ought to've bought it a long time ago, back there before you came along. Matter of fact, I hope you folks'll stay right here in the neighborhood as long as you live. But just in case you should ever happen to take a notion to sell out sometime—keep me in mind."

And then he added casually, "I'll give you five thousand cash any time."

The Jacksons won't sell their home. But it makes George feel good to think that probably he could almost double his money on it.

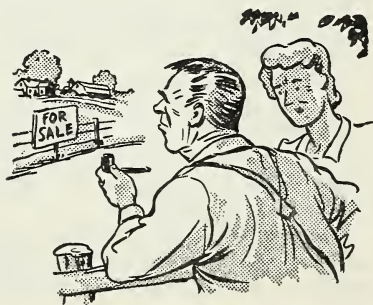
## The Man Who Bit off a Little More Than He Could Chew

Here is the case of a man who was perhaps a little too ambitious in his farming ideas. Peter Jones works in a typewriter plant. Several years ago he bought an acre of land along one of the main roads into town and built a small bungalow on it. His wife also works in town and this has been their home ever since. They have no children. Both enjoy life out in the open country; their cottage is nicely situated and has a little stream running behind it, where

they have fixed a swimming place and have a canoe.

Two years ago the farm almost across the road from Peter's house came on the market cheap. He got the notion that he would like to buy it and launch out into some real farming operations. So he did. He paid down about \$1,000 cash and gave a mortgage for about \$1,500 more—this being the cost of 75 acres of rather poor land with a run-down set of buildings. With the place he acquired a tractor and a few tools, plus three cows, and some young stock.

Now of course Peter didn't have time enough to do the work on his new farm himself. His original acre of land with garden and fruit trees had just given him good exercise after work, but to run the larger farm business required help. He managed to hire a man who stayed a month and then went off on a prolonged drunk. Peter



fired him and hired an elderly man who was sober and industrious but not very strong.

It took quite a bit of money to make necessary repairs on the new farm. The house had to have a new roof, the cow stable a new concrete floor, and he had to do some cement work and painting in the milkhouse, including a new concrete trough for cooling the milk. It took money to get the first year's crops under way. Seed had to be bought, and fertilizer; also some feed had to be bought before the pasture season, and the hired man had to have his wages regularly during the whole of that first summer when very little money was coming in.

At the end of the year the elderly hired man was sick and had to leave. There were six cows now in the stable and Peter found himself having to get up long before dawn, milk these and do the chores, and get the milk ready to go before he and his wife started for work. At night he had to hurry home and repeat. This went on for several weeks in the dead of winter, with zero weather and snowdrifts to make it interesting, before he could find another hired man.

This third chapter in the hired-help story lasted 3 months. When it came to finding help thereafter he was forced to use the services of a teen-age boy who was a good



milker and willing worker but who could not take the place of a man in the general field work. Peter just about worked himself out trying to get the crops harvested and keep his farm enterprise a going concern. The time came in the fall when the boy helper was drafted, and once more Peter faced the prospect of another winter of farm chores on top of his daily job in the shop.

This was too much. Peter recalled that life on 1 acre had been very pleasant, but with these extra 75 acres life was nothing but drudgery and he was getting nothing out of it either. The upshot was that he had an auction and sold off all of his livestock and most of the tools and crops on hand. Now he has the farm advertised for sale and looks forward to the day when his "farming" will again consist of a garden, a few fruit trees, a flock of chickens—and time to use the swimming pool and canoe that are waiting back of the house.

## Fish Story

A good many of us like to fish but never have the opportunity to do much fishing. Here's the little

story of a man who liked to fish—and did something about it.

Sam White is a tinsmith work-





ing in a hardware store in a small city. He has three children. He and his wife are both country-minded. Though reared in town, they decided to abandon crowded town life. They had saved several hundred dollars and so began looking around for a little place with some land.

Now it happens that Sam's town lies at the head of a long and lovely lake. What more natural than that a born fisherman—who had spent many happy hours on those waters—should turn his inquiring eye down the shores of the lake?

Hunt as he might, Sam couldn't find a cottage or farm for sale within 10 miles of town on either side of the lake. What he did finally was to buy 10 acres of land off the corner of a farm. The place had a few rods of lake frontage and sloped back up a gently rising hillside, with a tiny wood lot along one side.

The land cost about \$500 cash. From a mail-order house Sam then bought, on easy payments, one of those ready-cut bungalows—five small rooms and bath; cost complete with bathroom, plumbing, and furnace \$2,500. When it was finally erected on a good cellar wall, and had porches and walks

outside, it stood him in some \$2,800 above the cost of the lot. Of course, during wartime one couldn't build the house as cheaply as this.

The first summer Sam got a good well drilled, a little chicken house built, and started a flock of leghorns. And naturally, he made a big garden. It wasn't any prize winner that first year, but with liberal use of manure it did fairly well, even though it had necessarily been started on sod ground. In time this was to become a garden really worth seeing.

That fall he found a small, unused barn which he bought for the lumber. Working at odd times, he took the barn down and got it hauled to his own place. The following spring he proceeded to build himself a respectable little barn, using the best of the old lumber and buying some new material as needed.

Next came a cow. This he bought from the farmer who had sold him the land, with the understanding that bull service would be furnished when needed.

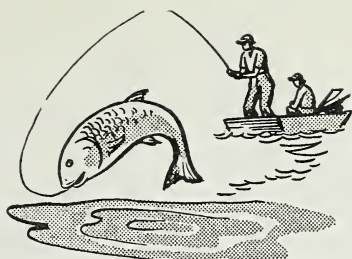
So now Sam White had become a sort of small-time farmer on the side. He was tinsmith all day and farmer (or fisherman) nights, mornings, and week ends. As he





was pretty successful with his garden and chickens, he presently found himself with a few odd things to sell—vegetables, eggs, broilers—over and above all that the family wanted to use. So it got to be a regular thing to take some of this stuff to town with him every morning. It sold readily to friends right in the store where he worked; in fact, he soon had a string of customers putting in advance orders.

Of course, the rest of this little story would be like thousands of others. Sam and his family are confirmed country folks now. They get a large part of their living from their own place, live in a good neighborhood, and have a comfortable home in a truly magnificent setting of lake and hills. Driving to and from work he regards as more pleasure than bother—the main road is only a quarter of a mile from his house and it takes only 15 minutes to reach town. On the few days in winter when the snow in his lane



is too deep he leaves his car with a neighbor on the main road.

About the only thing that is unique about this place is its location on that beautiful lake—with bass, pike, and perch right off Sam's dock, and lake trout out there in the deeper water. He has built a sort of breakwater and little harbor in front, and there sit his boats and minnow tanks and other fisherman's contraptions. Stop for supper with the White family and the chances are that you'll be treated to fried chicken or baked fresh trout. Either way you are likely to endorse Sam's judgment in having moved out to that little paradise!

## Here's the Point

These brief samples are cited with the idea of bringing out informally certain points about this matter of part-time farming. Veterans or others who are thinking about working at jobs in town and at the same time living out in the country might perhaps find it worth while to ponder some of these points.

1. It is possible, practicable, and profitable for many a man to work in a moderate-sized or small city and live out where he can

have a few acres of land and what goes with it. Thousands of city workers are actually doing this very thing, with pleasure and benefit to themselves and their families.

2. Remember, it takes money to own a farm, however small. You ought to have a little saved up—\$500, say; \$1,000 would be better. Veterans and many others can get credit, of course. But in the long run there isn't any real reserve outside your own money.

If you haven't any money at all, you better not try to buy a place. Rent one.

3. A great deal depends upon your judgment in choosing a home place. Be sure to get on an all-weather road; and see that the place has a fairly comfortable house, good water supply, and electricity in or near. If you ignore any of those four things, you'll be sorry.

4. Don't try to undertake more farming than you can handle. That is one of the most common mistakes. If your job in town is really the main thing, keep it so in your plans. Don't think of the "farm," as anything more than a secondary job. Don't aim, at first anyhow, for much more than a good garden and perhaps a few hens. Later you may want pigs, cow, more poultry, and fruit. But don't get yourself "out on a limb" at the very start.

5. Do a lot of thinking about the future of your job before you anchor yourself to a little country

place. If the job should fold up, is it a place that you could sell readily if you wanted to move somewhere else? Few part-time farms will return a living unless there is a dependable source of outside income.

6. Take your time about buying a farm, whether 1 acre or 100. Talk it over with your wife. Talk it over again and again. When, as, and if you get up to the point of really wanting to find such a place, look around. Then look around some more. Keep on looking. Don't let any glib seller persuade you to take something off on a dirt side road; or something that hasn't electricity right close by, or good water, or a fairly good house, or that costs too much. You'll find what you want if you look long enough.

7. Finally, if you want to live on the land, *go to it!* With ordinary common sense used in getting established, and with pluck and a willing family, it's a life fit for a king!

## Some Sources of Information

You can, of course, get information from many sources about this subject of part-time farming. Write to your State college of agriculture, or to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C., or to the county agricultural agent at the county seat of the county in which you are interested.

Samples of interesting bulletins already published are these:

Shall We Move to the Country? Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 479, Urbana, Ill.

Suggestions to Purchasers of

Farms. Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 309, University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Suggestions to Persons Who Plan to Farm or to Live in the Country. New York Agricultural College (Cornell) Extension Bulletin 652, Ithaca, N. Y.

Buying a Farm in Western Oregon. Oregon Agricultural College Extension Bulletin 635, Corvallis, Oreg.

Part-time Farming. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers' Bulletin No. 1966, Washington, D. C.

